The Shepherd Lady

Jean Ingelow

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THE SHEPHERD LADY.

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Sincerely Yours
Jean Ingelow

THE

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SHEPHERD LADY,

AND OTHER POEMS.

By JEAN INGELOW,

AUTHOR OF "SONGS OF SEVEN."

BOSTON:

ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1876.

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PRINTERS CAMBRIDGE

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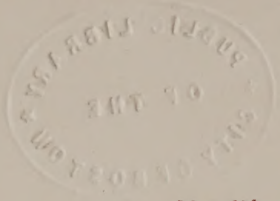
THE SHEPHERD LADY.

I.

WHO pipes upon the long green hill,
Where meadow grass is deep?
The white lamb bleats but followeth on —
Follow the clean white sheep.
The dear white lady in yon high tower,
She hearkeneth in her sleep.

All in long grass the piper stands,
Goodly and grave is he;
Outside the tower, at dawn of day,
The notes of his pipe ring free.
A thought from his heart doth reach to hers:
"Come down, O lady! to me."



The Shepherd Lady.

She lifts her head, she dons her gown:
Ah! the lady is fair;
She ties the girdle on her waist,
And binds her flaxen hair,
And down she stealeth, down and down,
Down the turret stair.

Behold him! With the flock he wons
Along yon grassy lea.
"My shepherd lord, my shepherd love,
What wilt thou, then, with me?
My heart is gone out of my breast,
And followeth on to thee."

" The dear white lady in yon high tower,
She hearkeneth in her sleep."

II.

"The white lambs feed in tender grass:
With them and thee to bide,
How good it were," she saith at noon;
"Albeit the meads are wide.
Oh! well is me," she saith when day
Draws on to eventide.

Hark! hark! the shepherd's voice. Oh, sweet!
Her tears drop down like rain.
"Take now this crook, my chosen, my fere,
And tend the flock full fain;
Feed them, O lady, and lose not one,
Till I shall come again."

Right soft her speech: "My will is thine,
And my reward thy grace!"
Gone are his footsteps over the hill,
Withdrawn his goodly face;
The mournful dusk begins to gather,
The daylight wanes apace.

"Take now this crook."

III.

On sunny slopes, ah! long the lady
Feedeth her flock at noon;
She leads it down to drink at eve
Where the small rivulets croon.
All night her locks are wet with dew,
Her eyes outwatch the moon.

Beyond the hills her voice is heard,
She sings when light doth wane:
"My longing heart is full of love,
Nor shall my watch be vain.
My shepherd lord, I see him not,
But he will come again."

"On sunny slopes, ah! long the lady
Feedeth her flock at noon."

ABOVE THE CLOUDS.

AND can this be my own world?
'Tis all gold and snow,
Save where scarlet waves are hurled
Down yon gulf below?
'Tis thy world, 'tis my world,
City, mead, and shore,
For he that hath his own world
Hath many worlds more.

LOVE'S THREAD OF GOLD.

IN the night she told a story,
In the night and all night through,
While the moon was in her glory,
And the branches dropped with dew.
'Twas my life she told, and round it
Rose the years as from a deep;
In the world's great heart she found it,
Cradled like a child asleep.
In the night I saw her weaving
By the misty moonbeam cold,
All the weft her shuttle cleaving
With a sacred thread of gold.
Ah! she wept me tears of sorrow,
Lulling tears so mystic sweet;
Then she wove my last to-morrow,
And her web lay at my feet.

Love's Thread of Gold.

Of my life she made the story:
I must weep — so soon 'twas told!
But your name did lend it glory,
And your love its thread of gold!

FAILURE.

WE are much bound to them that do succeed;
But, in a more pathetic sense, are bound
To such as fail. They all our loss expound;
They comfort us for work that will not speed,
And life — itself a failure.

Failure.

Ay, his deed,
Sweetest in story, who the dusk profound
Of Hades flooded with entrancing sound,
Music's own tears, was failure. Doth it read
Therefore the worse? Ah, no! so much to dare,
He fronts the regnant Darkness on its throne.—
So much to do; impetuous even there,
He pours out love's disconsolate sweet moan—
He wins; but few for that his deed recall:
Its power is in the look which costs him all.

ONE MORNING, OH! SO EARLY.

ONE morning, oh! so early, my belovèd, my belovèd,
All the birds were singing blithely, as if never they would cease;
'Twas a thrush sang in my garden, "Hear the story, hear the story!"
And the lark sang, "Give us glory!"
And the dove said, "Give us peace!"

Then I listened, oh! so early, my belovèd, my belovèd,
To that murmur from the woodland of the dove, my dear, the dove;
When the nightingale came after, "Give us fame to sweeten duty!"
When the wren sang, "Give us beauty!"
She made answer, "Give us love!"

One Morning, Oh! So Early.

Sweet is spring, and sweet the morning, my belovèd, my belovèd ;
Now for us doth spring, doth morning, wait upon the year's increase,
And my prayer goes up, "Oh, give us, crowned in youth with marriage glory,
Give for all our life's dear story,
Give us love, and give us peace!"

THE DAYS WITHOUT ALLOY.

WHEN I sit on market-days amid the comers and the goers,
Oh! full oft I have a vision of the days without alloy,
And a ship comes up the river with a jolly gang of towers,
And a "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

There is busy talk around me, all about mine ears it hummeth,
But the wooden wharves I look on, and a dancing, heaving buoy,
For 'tis tidetime in the river, and she cometh — oh, she cometh!
With a "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

Then I hear the water washing, never golden waves were brighter,
And I hear the capstan creaking — 'tis a sound that cannot cloy.

"And a ship comes up the river with a jolly gang of towers."

The Days Without Alloy.

Bring her to, to ship her lading, brig or schooner, sloop or lighter,
With a "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

"Will ye step aboard, my dearest? for the high seas lie before us."
So I sailed with him the river in those days without alloy;
Sailed afar, but when, I wonder, shall a sweeter sound float o'er us
Than yon "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

THE LEAVES OF LIGN ALOES.

DROP, drop from the leaves of lign aloes,
O honey-dew! drop from the tree.
Float up through your clear river shallows,
White lilies, beloved of the bee.

Let the people, O Queen! say, and bless thee,
Her bounty drops soft as the dew,
And spotless in honor confess thee,
As lilies are spotless in hue.

On the roof stands yon white stork awaking,
His feathers flush rosy the while,
For, lo! from the blushing east breaking,
The sun sheds the bloom of his smile.

Let them boast of thy word, "It is certain;
We doubt it no more," let them say,
"Than to-morrow that night's dusky curtain
Shall roll back its folds for the day."

ON THE ROCKS BY ABERDEEN.

ON the rocks by Aberdeen,
Where the whislin' wave had been,
As I wandered and at e'en
Was eerie;
There I saw thee sailing west,
And I ran with joy opprest —
Ay, and took out all my best,
My dearie.

Then I busked mysel' wi' speed,
And the neighbors cried "What need?
'Tis a lass in any weed
Aye bonny!"
Now my heart, my heart is sair:
What's the good, though I be fair,
For thou'lt never see me mair,
Man Johnnie!

" Then I busked mysel' wi' speed,
And the neighbors cried " What need ?"

FEATHERS AND MOSS.

THE marten flew to the finch's nest,
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay:
"The arrow it sped to thy brown mate's breast;
Low in the broom is thy mate to-day."

"Liest thou low, love? low in the broom?
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay,
Warm the white eggs till I learn his doom."
She beateth her wings, and away, away.

"Ah, my sweet singer, thy days are told
(Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay)!
Thine eyes are dim, and the eggs grow cold.
O mournful morrow! O dark to-day!"

The finch flew back to her cold, cold nest,
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay,
Mine is the trouble that rent her breast,
And home is silent, and love is clay.

SWEET is childhood — childhood's over,
Kiss and part.
Sweet is youth; but youth's a rover —
So's my heart.
Sweet is rest; but by all showing
Toil is nigh.
We must go. Alas! the going,
Say "good-bye."

THE GYPSY'S SELLING SONG.

MY good man — he's an old, old man,
And my good man got a fall,
To buy me a bargain so fast he ran
When he heard the gypsies call:
"Buy, buy brushes,
Baskets wrought o' rushes.
Buy them, buy them, take them, try them,
Buy, dames all."

My old man, he has money and land,
And a young, young wife am I.
Let him put the penny in my white hand
When he hears the gypsies cry:
"Buy, buy laces,
Veils to screen your faces.
Buy them, buy them, take and try them.
Buy, maids, buy."

"Buy them, buy them, take and try them.
Buy, maids, buy."

MY FAIR LADY.

MY fair lady's a dear, dear lady —
I walked by her side to woo.
In a garden alley, so sweet and shady,
She answered, "I love not you,
John, John Brady,"
Quoth my dear lady,
"Pray now, pray now, go your way now,
Do, John, do!"

Yet my fair lady's my own, own lady,
For I passed another day;
While making her moan, she sat all alone,
And thus and thus did she say:
"John, John Brady,"
Quoth my dear lady,
"Do now, do now, once more woo now,
Pray, John, pray!"

SLEEP AND TIME.

"WAKE, baillie, wake! the crafts are out;
Wake!" said the knight, "be quick!
For high street, bye street, over the town
They fight with poker and stick."
Said the squire, "A fight so fell was ne'er
In all thy bailliewick."
What said the old clock in the tower?
"Tick, tick, tick!"

"Wake, daughter, wake! the hour draws on;
Wake!" quoth the dame, "be quick!
The meats are set, the guests are coming,
The fiddler waxing his stick."
She said, "The bridegroom waiting and waiting
To see thy face is sick."
What said the new clock in her bower?
"Tick, tick, tick!"

MASTER, QUOTH THE AULD HOUND.

"MASTER," quoth the auld hound,
"Where will ye go?"
"Over moss, over muir,
To court my new jo."
"Master, though the night be merk,
I'se follow through the snow.

"Court her, master, court her,
So shall ye do weel;
But and ben she'll guide the house,
I'se get milk and meal.
Ye'se get lilting while she sits
With her rock and reel."

"For, oh! she has a sweet tongue,
And een that look down,
A gold girdle for her waist,
And a purple gown.
She has a good word forbye
Fra a' folk in the town."

"Court her, master, court her,
So shall ye do weel."

LIKE A LAVEROCK IN THE LIFT.

IT'S we two, it's we two, it's we two for aye,
All the world and we two, and Heaven be our stay.
Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!
All the world was Adam once, with Eve by his side.

What's the world, my lass, my love! — what can it do?
I am thine, and thou art mine; life is sweet and new.
If the world have missed the mark, let it stand by,
For we two have gotten leave, and once more we'll try.

Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!
It's we two, it's we two, happy side by side.
Take a kiss from me thy man; now the song begins:
"All is made afresh for us, and the brave heart wins."

When the darker days come, and no sun will shine,
Thou shalt dry my tears, lass, and I'll dry thine.
It's we two, it's we two, while the world's away,
Sitting by the golden sheaves on our wedding-day.

AT ONE AGAIN.

AT ONE AGAIN.

I. NOONDAY.

TWO angry men — in heat they sever,
And one goes home by a harvest field: —
"Hope's nought," quoth he, "and vain endeavour;
"I said and say it, I will not yield!

"As for this wrong, no art can mend it,
The bond is shiver'd that held us twain;
Old friends we be, but law must end it,
Whether for loss or whether for gain.

"His strawberry cow slipped loose her tether,
And trod the best of my barley down."

At One Again.

"Yon stream is small — full slow its wending;
But winning is sweet, but right is fine;
And shoal of trout, or willowy bending —
Though Law be costly — I'll prove them mine.

"His strawberry cow slipped loose her tether,
And trod the best of my barley down;
His little lasses at play together
Pluck'd the poppies my boys had grown.

"What then? — Why nought! *She* lack'd of reason;
And *they* — my little ones match them well: —
But *this* — Nay all things have their season,
And 'tis my season to curb and quell."

II. SUNSET.

SO saith he, when noontide fervours flout him,
So thinks, when the West is amber and red,
When he smells the hop-vines sweet about him,
And the clouds are rosy overhead.

While slender and tall the hop-poles going
Straight to the West in their leafy lines,
Portion it out into chambers, glowing,
And bask in red day as the sun declines.

Between the leaves in his latticed arbour
He sees the sky, as they flutter and turn,
While moor'd like boats in a golden harbour
The fleets of feathery cloudlets burn.

At One Again.

Withdrawn in shadow, he thinketh over
  Harsh thoughts, the fruit-laden trees among,
Till pheasants call their young to cover,
  And cushats coo them a nursery song.

And flocks of ducks forsake their sedges,
  Wending home to the wide barn-door,
And loaded wains between the hedges
  Slowly creep to his threshing floor —

Slowly creep. And his tired senses,
  Float him over the magic stream,
To a world where Fancy recompenses
  Vengeful thoughts, with a troubled dream!

"And his tired senses,
Float him over the magic stream."

III. THE DREAM.

WHAT'S this? a wood — What's that? one calleth,
Calleth and cryeth in mortal dread —
He hears men strive — then somewhat falleth! —
"Help me, neighbour — I'm hard bestead."

The dream is strong — the voice he knoweth —
But when he would run, his feet are fast,
And death lies beyond, and no man goeth
To help, and he says the time is past.

His feet are held, and he shakes all over, —
Nay — they are free — he has found the place —
Green boughs are gather'd — what is't they cover? —
"I pray you, look on the dead man's face;

At One Again.

You that stand by," he saith, and cowers —
"Man, or Angel, to guard the dead
With shadowy spear, and a brow that lowers,
And wing-points reared in the gloom o'erhead. —

I dare not look. He wronged me never.
Men say we differ'd; they speak amiss:
This man and I were neighbours ever —
I would have ventured my life for his.

But fast my feet were — fast with tangles —
Aye! words — but they were not sharp, I trow,
Though parish feuds and vestry wrangles —
O pitiful sight — I see thee now! —

If we fell out, 'twas but foul weather,
After long shining! O bitter cup, —
What — dead? — why, man, we play'd together —
Art dead — ere a friend can make it up?"

IV. THE WAKING.

OVER his head the chafer hummeth,
Under his feet shut daisies bend:
Waken, man! the enemy cometh,
Thy neighbour, counted so long a friend.

He cannot waken — and firm, and steady,
The enemy comes with lowering brow;
He looks for war, his heart is ready,
His thoughts are bitter — he will not bow.

He fronts the seat, — the dream is flinging
A spell that his footsteps may not break, —
But one in the garden of hops is singing —
The dreamer hears it, and starts awake.

"But one in the garden of hops is singing—
The dreamer hears it, and starts awake."

V. A SONG.

WALKING apart, she thinks none listen;
And now she carols, and now she stops;
And the evening star begins to glisten
Atween the lines of blossoming hops.

Sweetest Mercy, your mother taught you
All uses and cares that to maids belong;
Apt scholar to read and to sew she thought you —
She did not teach you that tender song —

"The lady sang in her charmèd bower,
Sheltered and safe under roses blown —
'*Storm cannot touch me, hail, nor shower,*
Where all alone I sit, all alone.

" The lady sang in her charmèd bower,
Sheltered and safe under roses blown."

At One Again.

My bower! The fair Fay twined it round me;
Care nor trouble can pierce it through;
But once a sigh from the warm world found me
Between two leaves that were bent with dew.

And day to night, and night to morrow,
Though soft as slumber the long hours wore
I looked for my dower of love, of sorrow—
Is there no more—no more—no more?'

Give her the sun-sweet light, and duly
To walk in shadow, nor chide her part;
Give her the rose, and truly, truly—
To wear its thorn with a patient heart.—

Misty as dreams the moonbeam lyeth
Chequered and faint on her charmèd floor;
The lady singeth, the lady sigheth—
'Is there no more—no more—no more!'"

VI. LOVERS.

A CRASH of boughs! — one through them breaking!
Mercy is startled, and fain would fly,
But e'en as she turns, her steps o'ertaking,
He pleads with her — "Mercy, it is but I!"

"Mercy!" he touches her hand unbidden —
"The air is balmy, I pray you stay —
Mercy?" Her downcast eyes are hidden,
And never a word she has to say.

Till closer drawn, her prison'd fingers
He takes to his lips with a yearning strong;
And she murmurs low, that late she lingers,
Her mother will want her, and think her long.

At One Again.

"Good mother is she, then honour duly
The lightest wish in her heart that stirs;
But there is a bond yet dearer truly,
And there is a love that passeth hers.

Mercy, Mercy!" Her heart attendeth —
Love's birthday blush on her brow lies sweet;
She turns her face when his own he bendeth,
And the lips of the youth and the maiden meet.

"She turns her face when his own he bendeth,
And the lips of the youth and the maiden meet."

VII. FATHERS.

MOVE through the bowering hops, O lovers,—
Wander down to the golden West,—
But two stand mute in the shade that covers
Your love and youth from their souls opprest.

A little shame on their spirits stealing,—
A little pride that is loth to sue,—
A little struggle with soften'd feeling,—
And a world of fatherly care for you.

One says: "To this same running water,
May be, Neighbour, your claim is best."
And one—"Your son has kissed my daughter:
Let the matters between us—rest."

"Move through the bowering hops, O lovers,—
Wander down to the golden West."

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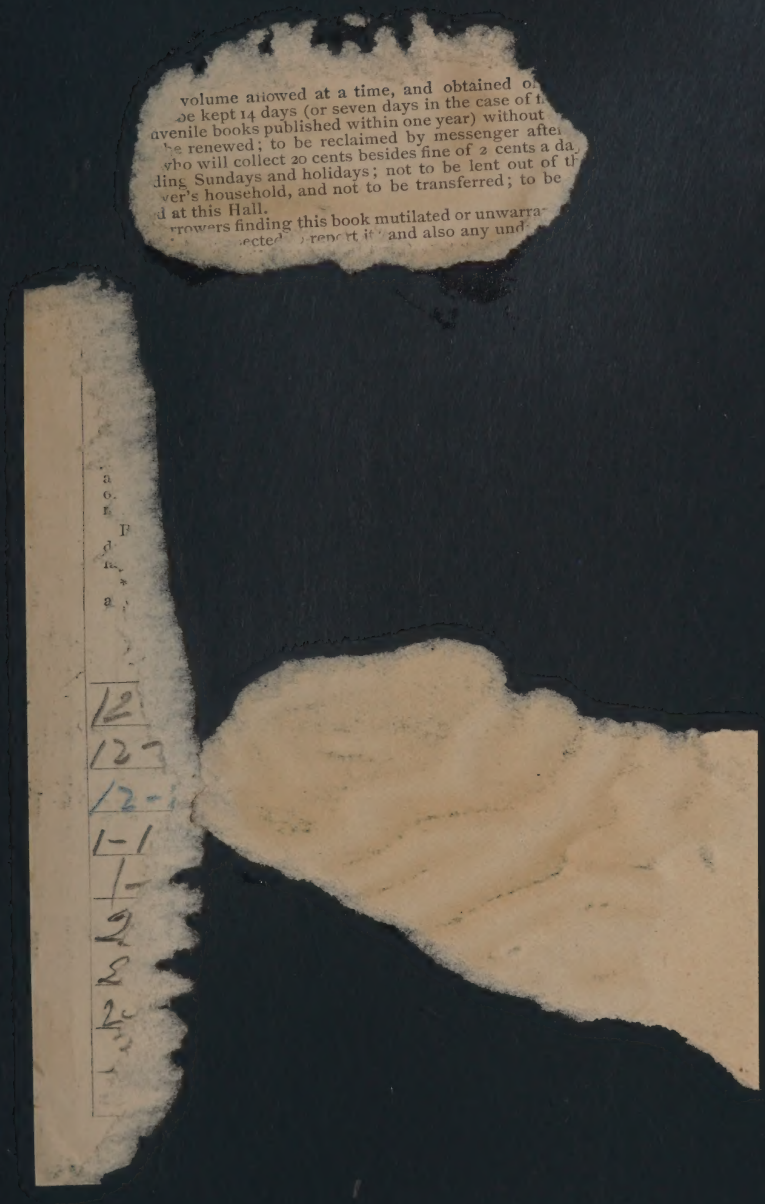
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